

# WORKFORCE HORIZONS

## Planning Tomorrow's Workforce Today

Louisiana Department of Civil Service

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### *In This Issue:*

- ✓ *Some Tips for Developing Competency Models – p.1*
- ✓ *Changes in Federal Legislation on the Horizon – p. 2*

### **SOME TIPS FOR DEVELOPING COMPETENCY MODELS**

Employers we are always looking for ways to get more bang for their buck, a greater return on investment in their employees. But today, when organizations are experiencing retirements of experienced baby boomers coupled with hard economic times and budget cuts, it is even more important to make sure that the employees you do have possess the competencies necessary for superior performance.

Whether you are looking to recruit and hire the best employees from outside or to identify, retain and develop the best of your internal talent pool, you face the same problems. How do you objectively identify the skills and competencies that make employees desirable for your organization? How do you assess these competencies in

### **WORKFORCE PLANNING MAXIM OF THE DAY**

*"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said."*  
– Peter F. Drucker

applicants once you've identified them? How do you measure these competencies or assess potential and develop them in current employees?

Many organizations develop a competency model to help them develop and manage talent. Competency models vary in complexity. But here are some tips adapted from Richard Oyen's white paper "Ten Best Practices for Successful Competency Management."<sup>1</sup>

Start With Core Competencies: These are competencies that apply to all jobs and employees in the organization and often relate to the high level values of the organization. Examples are Integrity, Honesty, Time-Management and Communication. The final list should be manageable, no more than 10-15 competencies.

Functional Competencies: These are job or position specific competencies that are

normally identified after core competencies. For example, a Human Resources Manager position might require functional competencies in Recruitment and Staffing, and Compensation and Pay in addition to the core competencies of communication, honesty and time-management. Of course, trying to identify functional competencies for every job in the organization would be a very time consuming and possibly not even desirable task. So divide the task up into manageable pieces. Start with one division or a particular group of jobs that is important and then proceed to do others on a priority basis.

Develop Job Profiles: These can be done by position or larger groupings of jobs and include both core and functional competencies. The simplest approach is to start by making a single profile that would apply to every job in a division or section of an organization. For example, you could create a profile for the Human Resources Office that would include competencies everyone in that office would need. Later you could add more detail by developing additional profiles for individual positions or jobs by adding position-specific functional competencies to the profile developed for the entire HR Office. Remember that a primary concern in profiling is keeping the number of competencies manageable, particularly if you plan to incorporate them into performance appraisal or assessments of outside applicants. So you may have to pare down your initial list of competencies to the 10-15 most important.

Consider Adding Proficiency Levels: Proficiency levels scale the degree to which an employee must demonstrate a competency, usually ranging on a five point scale from beginner to mastery. The proficiency level required in a particular competency may vary from one job to

another (e.g. a supervisor position might be required to have a higher level of a competency than his or her subordinate positions). Also, proficiency levels might vary in the same position due to experience. For example, a Human Resource Analyst with two years of experience might not be required to have the same level of proficiency as one with ten years of experience.

Inform Employees: Keep employees informed about the competency model. Let them view the competencies and profiles for all jobs. Particularly make sure to keep them up-to-date on how the data will be used – hiring, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation, etc.

Don't just assess competencies; develop employees: It does no good to profile jobs and develop a competency model if the data is not used to improve your workforce. After identifying required competencies and assessing your current employees, develop those employees. Bridge the gaps and develop potential with individual career development plans and succession planning.

Recruit with competency in mind: When recruiting, look for candidates that have the most competencies and the highest proficiency levels in those competencies. When hiring for an entry-level position, consider the applicant's potential for advancement. Don't just hire for the entry-level vacancy. Hire for the career the employee will spend with you.

## **CHANGES IN FEDERAL LEGISLATION ON THE HORIZON**

Our new President-elect has promised us change, and part of that promise includes significant changes to labor and employment laws very likely to be enacted under a

Democratically controlled Congress. Here are some highlights of what to expect taken from a recent article in [Human Resource Executive Online](#).<sup>2</sup> Bills concerning these acts have been referred to various committees where they are currently pending.

Civil Rights Act of 2008: This is a comprehensive piece of legislation amending a number of employment discrimination laws. A major change of the Act is that it would allow *individuals* to seek relief against federally funded entities for practices that have an unjustified discriminatory effect without having to prove discriminatory intent. For example, under the new Act a pre-employment test that has adverse impact against a group may be challenged by individual members of that group who are excluded or not hired even though there is no evidence of intent to discriminate. Under the Supreme Court's current interpretation of the law, only the federal government can bring such claims based on disparate impact. So the new Act would significantly expand this right to individuals.

Another part of the Act would reverse the current interpretation of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) that bars private individuals from suing their state employers for age discrimination. The Supreme Court currently holds states to be immune from such claims under the Eleventh Amendment. The Civil Rights Act of 2008 would include an express waiver of Eleventh Amendment immunity and thus allow such suits.

Equal Remedies Act of 2007: This Act would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1991 to remove the \$300,000 cap on damages for intentional employment discrimination.

FMLA Expansion Act: This Act would amend the current law to extend coverage to employees working for employers that employ at least 25 employees. The current law applies only to employers of 50 or more employees. The Act would extend eligibility to employees who miss work to deal with the effects of domestic violence. It would also allow eligible employees to take up to 24 hours in a twelve-month period to participate in a school academic activity for their child or literacy training under a family literacy program.

### **QUOTE OF THE DAY**

*"Too often we... enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought."*  
– **John F. Kennedy**

<sup>1</sup>Oyen, Richard, "Ten Best Practices for Successful Competency Management," SumTotal, 2008, [www.sumtotalsystems.com](http://www.sumtotalsystems.com)

<sup>2</sup>Mitchell, Stephen C. and Tighe, J. Hagood, "Change Employers Can Expect," *Human Resource Executive Online*, 12-29-2008

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Comments and submissions: We welcome questions about workforce planning and suggestions for improvements to the newsletter as well as submissions of articles about what your agency is doing in workforce planning. Questions and comments should be sent to the editor.

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